

TOPPING'S BIG DEAL

A squib in a Baker City paper the other day purported to tell how Colonel E. S. Topping, of Sumpter, located the now famous Le Roi mine. The item was a mass of inaccuracies. Today Colonel Topping told the Miner man the straight of it.

"In 1890," he said, "I was running a store at Nelson. Two prospectors, Joe Moris and Joseph Burgeois, located four claims where Rossland is now located and drove one stake on a fifth. They brought down some ore, which I had assayed and found worth \$10. Moris and Burgeois were prodigiously disappointed and were for abandoning the location; at once. I pointed out that \$10 rock was at least an indication of the existence of gold, and advised further work. They finally made a proposition for me to pay the cost of filing the five notices of location in return for my choice of any claim in the group. I did so and selected the claim which had been only partially staked. I named it Le Roi (the king) and sunk a seven-foot hole, showing eighteen feet of \$40 rock.

"That winter I went to Spokane and sold a 16-30ths interest for \$30,000, ten per cent down.

"And that's how I came to locate the famous Le Roi mine."

"In those days," continued Colonel Topping, "I was willing to take a chance at anything in the mining line. One day a friend of mine made a deal for the purchase of the Gertrude mine, near the Le Roi, for three gallons of whiskey. Before the goods were delivered he got cold feet, so I took the deal off his hands and paid over the booze to the satisfied prospector who had located the claim. A couple of months later I was down in Spokane, and called to see a secondhand dealer, whose business included the purchase of anything from a dozen toothpicks to a church and congregation. After three days of hard labor I unloaded the Gertrude on him, receiving in return \$55 in cash, a good watch with a mighty thin case, a sewing machine and 11,000 cigars.

"It was an out-and-out case of 'sight-and-unseen' trade. He never saw the mine and I didn't sample those cigars, otherwise negotiations would have been all off. You may talk about skunk cabbage wrappers and gum-shoe fillers, but those cigars beat anything in the line of prodigious odor ever invented. I took them along with me when I went back up north and fell foul of a customs inspector at Marcus. The duty on cigars was 2 1/2 cents each, with an additional 25 per cent ad valorem, which would make those cigars stand me about \$300, if I wanted to get back home with 'em. I spent three days at Marcus, arguing with that customs inspector, and finally compromised by allowing myself to be appointed an inspector, which position I held for two years.

"The cigars? Oh, yes. You see, as store keeper, tavern keeper, mine investor, prospector and soldier of fortune, up there, I had made a number of enemies. I used to watch for 'em at Marcus, and before I would let them cross over

the line I would make 'em smoke out of those cigars.

"Six thousand of those cigars finally got past me as inspector and found their way to my Nelson hotel. George Turner, then part owner of the Le Roi, later United States senator, and now the democratic candidate for governor of Washington, was one of my patrons. Turner only smokes imported cigars.

"One day he called for his favorite brand and I palmed off five of the second-hand dealer's stinkers on him. He lit one, took a puff or two, eyed me suspiciously, and asked:

"'Imported, eh?'"

"'Sure,' said I.

"'From where?' he asked.

"'Marcus,' says I.

"Turner never got the taste of those cigars out of his mouth. Years later I met him in Chicago while he was on his way home from a sitting in London of the international boundary commission.

"'Howde, Colonel,' said the senator. 'How's the importing business?'"

"'I reckon the Gertrude was worth the money. Over \$200,000 has since been spent on the property, but the dividends to date wouldn't pay for that three gallons of whiskey.'"

THAT RESERVE WITHDRAWAL

Chief Engineer Joseph West, of the Sumpter Valley railway, passed through from Baker this morning, on his way to Tipton, beyond which point he has a couple of surveying crews in the field, carefully selecting a route to the John Day country, and endeavoring to find a feasible grade into the Quartzburg mining district. Mr. West announces that no extension will this year be built beyond Tipton.

It was largely, if not mainly, through the personal efforts of Chief Engineer West that the recent withdrawal of a large area of timber land was ordered from the Blue mountain forest reserve. Mr. West went to Washington on such a mission, presenting to the administration the fact that the withdrawal of a tremendous acreage of Blue Mountain land for forest reserves made impossible the extension of the Sumpter Valley railway through to the John Day country and on to Burns, the terminal point named in the company's articles of incorporation. The Oregon congressional delegation heard Mr. West's plea and offered to use its influence with the department of the interior, provided the railway company could and would give assurances that the John Day and Burns extension would be built. Mr. West evidently made good, because it is a matter of record that all the members of the Oregon delegation exerted their influence toward bringing about the throwing open of various townships described by Mr. West.

Strenuous opposition to Mr. West's petition was met with from Secretary Hitchcock, who, according to reliable information, was forced to accede to the delegation's demands by President Roosevelt himself whose evident desire was to placate the people of Oregon and pour balm upon the many political wounds inflicted on influential Webfoot republicans by the honorable secretary of the interior, whose bitter policy against Oregon and Oregonians is

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undoubtedly due to the feud existing between himself and Congressman Binger Herman.

Mr. West enlisted the support of Gifford Pinchot, chief of the forestry division of the interior department, whose representations, and the representations of Mr. West to the Oregon delegation, resulted in President Roosevelt taking the matter out of the hands of Secretary Hitchcock and ordering a big area of land restored to entry in the Blue Mountain reserve.

Mr. West says that the area so restored was not so large as that petitioned for by him, and recommended by Mr. Pinchot. There is reason, however, to believe that when the present temporary Blue Mountain forest reserve is finally made permanent, other tracts will be eliminated therefrom, so that the original petition of the Sumpter Valley company will ultimately be granted.

GRANT COUNTY PLACER MINES IN OPERATION

The placer mine owned by C. L. Roddick and J. F. Klink on Quartz gulch is still being operated and from all appearances will continue until the cold weather of winter puts a stop to it. Mr. Roddick, who is superintending the work at the mines, says that they still have ample water for a nine hour run each day, and the cool weather is expected to soon increase their water supply. Where they are operating this season, they have a bank of about fifty feet in height which contains several stratas of pay gravel. They are not working on bedrock, nor have they any idea how far it is to bedrock. The ground is easily worked, and before the close of the season, they will have sent through their race and down Quartz Gulch a vast quantity of earth and gravel. He expects to make a fair cleanup this season, though they have been bothered considerable with the sliding of the high bank against which they have been working.

L. O. Peone and Geo. Culp returned Sunday from Meadow creek in the North Fork country of Granite, where they have been for several weeks doing assessment work on some placer ground owned by Judge Davis, Errett Hicks and A. D. Leedy, of this city, and New Divington, of the Middle Fork country. Mr. Peone brought with him quite a sprinkle of nuggets which were taken from the placer mine while running

a cut on the property, which is ample evidence that the ground contains ample of what its owners were looking for when they located the property last year. Mr. Peone is of the opinion that the ground will pay well when properly opened up, as it prospects well at the present stage of development.

John Clements came over from his mines on Myrtle creek where he went some time since to arrange to construct a new ditch, in order to acquire ample water for the operation of the property. He has made surveys and finds that he can secure ample water by the expenditure of about \$2,000. He is now waiting word from Sumpter people who are interested with him, but hopes to be able to complete the construction of the proposed new ditch and have everything in readiness for spring work before winter.—Canyon City Eagle.

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